

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02658 151019Z  
ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /069 W  
-----103451 151032Z /20

O R 111330Z MAY 78 ZDS  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7929  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 2658

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: UNRWA, LE  
SUBJECT: UNRWA'S DECISION TO MOVE ITS REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

REF: (A) AMMAN 4080, (B) DAMASCUS 2622, (C) STATE 118880

1. IN A MEETING WITH EMBOFF ON MAY 9, UNRWA'S FIELD DIRECTOR FOR LEBANON, ROBERT PREVOT, RECOUNTED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT UNRWA'S DECISION TO MOVE ITS REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FROM BEIRUT.

2. THE DECISION TO MOVE WAS DEFINITIVE AND APPROVED PERSONALLY BY U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM. (ACCORDING TO ANGELA GHANEM OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL'S OFFICE, MOST OF THE 400 HEADQUARTERS' EMPLOYEES WOULD BE LEAVING, ALTHOUGH THE PRECISE NUMBER DEPENDED ON THE NEW LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS. THE 2300 EMPLOYEES OF THE LEBANON FIELD OFFICE WOULD REMAIN, HOWEVER.)

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3. PREVOT SAID UNRWA WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RELOCATE ITS HEADQUARTERS IN VIENNA. (MRS. GHANEM, HOWEVER, SAID THE DECISION HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE.) PREVOT ADDED THAT SYRIA AND JORDAN WERE THE ONLY TWO ARAB STATES THAT HAD SO FAR INDICATED ANY REAL OPPOSITION TO THE MOVE TO VIENNA. DAMASCUS HAD ALWAYS OPPOSED TRANSFERRING UNRWA'S HEADQUARTERS TO A EUROPEAN CAPITAL, WHILE AMMAN

HAD LONG BEEN PRESSING FOR UNRWA TO MOVE ITS HEADQUARTERS TO AMMAN. NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO PREVOT, NEITHER SYRIA NOR AMMAN HAD GUARANTEED UNRWA ADEQUATE FACILITIES, WHILE GOOD OFFICE SPACE IN VIENNA WAS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE. AN ADVANCE PARTY FROM UNRWA HAD ALREADY GONE TO VIENNA. THE FINAL MOVE WOULD PROBABLY BEGIN BEFORE THE END OF THIS MONTH AND BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF JULY.

4. THE PLO WAS OFFICIALLY OPPOSED TO THE MOVE, BUT HAD TOLD UNRWA PRIVATELY THAT IT COULD LIVE WITH THE DECISION AS LONG AS UNRWA CONTINUED TO PROVIDE ITS SERVICES IN LEBANON. THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT ANY OF THE POTENTIAL MAJOR ARAB DONORS, SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, AND LIBYA, WOULD RECONSIDER THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AS A RESULT OF AN UNRWA MOVE TO VIENNA. AFTER THEY KNEW OF PLANNED MOVE TO VIENNA, PLO OFFICIALS HAD TOLD UNRWA THAT THEY WOULD SEEK INCREASED CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ARAB STATES, PREVOT SAID.

5. THE LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR UNRWA'S DECISION. HE ASKED ONLY THAT UNRWA RECONSIDER IF THERE WERE INDICATIONS OF A MAJOR AND ENDURING CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IN THE SECURITY SITUATION HERE. UNRWA HAD AGREED, BUT REGARDED SUCH A CHANGE AS MOST UNLIKELY.

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6. ON MAY 6, COMMISSIONER-GENERAL MCELHINEY LEFT BEIRUT VIA VIENNA FOR NEW YORK, WHERE HE WILL BE MEETING WITH UN OFFICIALS AND ATTENDING A CONFERENCE OF OPEC NATIONS TO DISCUSS AN OPEC CONTRIBUTION TO UNRWA. AFTERWARDS, MCELHINEY WILL TAKE VACATION AND RETURN TO BEIRUT IN EARLY JULY, PREVOT SAID.

7. PREVOT ALSO NOTED THAT HE WAS INFORMALLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN UNRWA OFFICE IN TRIPOLI (LEBANON), WHICH HE COULD USE FOR RUNNING LOCAL UNRWA AFFAIRS IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS BREAKDOWN IN THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

8. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY AMMAN (REFTEL A) AND DEPARTMENT (REFTEL C) THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR UNRWA TO REMAIN IN THE REGION, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT UNRWA'S DECISION TO MOVE ITS HEADQUARTERS FROM LEBANON TO VIENNA OR ELSEWHERE IS NOT A MAJOR ISSUE AS FAR AS LEBANON IS CONCERNED. ALTHOUGH THE UNRWA DECISION HAS STRUCK THE LEBANESE PUBLIC AS AN ILL OMEN, WE DOUBT THAT IT WILL HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE COURSE

OF EVENTS HERE. WE DEFER TO ADDRESSEES ON THE  
REACTIONS OF OTHER ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY ON  
EVIDENCE THAT UNRWA'S DECISION WILL SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT  
FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA BY POTENTIALLY MAJOR DONORS.

9. PLEASE PROTECT BOTH MR. PREVOT AND MRS. GHANEM AS  
SOURCES OF ABOVE REMARKS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEES, SECURITY, HEADQUARTERS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSFER OF OFFICES, CLOSURE OF OFFICES  
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